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The Door Closes on Castro

By Joseph Newman

Shortly before the Foreign Ministers of the American republics gathered in Washington to consider the case against Cuba, Raul Castro, Fidel's alter ego, began serenading them with dulcet strains about peace and good will. It was not always thus, and it was not the same Raulito we had known in the past—the one who thundered commands like a little Napoleon, moving his Communist legions for the "liberation" of Latin America, from Havana to Tierra del Fuego.

But the political-military climate had changed radically since the Soviet missile retreat. Latin-American diplomats in Moscow reported that the Russians were becoming disenchanted with their prize in the Caribbean; that the risk of conflict with the United States was too great and the cost of maintaining Castro, estimated at \$1½ million a day, was too high.

The Castro brothers changed their tune accordingly, and Raul issued his statement to the press saying that he was ready to go anywhere, "even to the moon," to enter into negotiations with the United States. But he obviously would be taking his basic Communist positions with him.

For Cubans

The reply came at the close of the meeting of American Foreign Ministers—not only from the United States but from 15 republics. It was in two parts: a resolution of reprisals against Castro's armed attempt to destroy the Venezuelan government and a declaration of support for the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom.

The declaration, directed to the Cuban people, was intended to make clear that the sanctions were directed not against them but against their oppressive regime. And

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though they would be affected by the economic reprisals, they might also welcome these measures as a contribution to their own efforts "to free themselves in the near future from the tyranny of the Communist regime which oppresses them."

For Boycott

The main thrust of the resolution, calling for suspension of trade and diplomatic relations with Cuba, is political rather than economic or diplomatic. Most American republics already have adopted these "measures unilaterally." The fact that the remaining few are now obligated to do so may not make much material difference to the Castro regime.

Taken together with the declaration of support, however, the resolution, in effect, means that the American republics propose not to come to terms with Cuba so long as Castro is in power. That is why Secretary of State Rusk could say with good reason, after the Foreign Ministers had voted, that "Castro has no future in Cuba or this hemisphere."

This is the first time the American republics have collectively written off Fidel Castro. Whether he temporarily withstands the economic and diplomatic pressures does not matter. What should prove decisive in the long run is that he cannot have peace from the American republics because the American republics are now convinced that neither they nor the Cuban people can have peace so long as he is in

With characteristic inversion of logic, Fidel Castro now claims the right to subvert any American republic which tries to subvert his. But ever since he took power he has been dedicating himself to subverting an entire continent (using Ernesto "Che" Guevara's handbook on guerrilla warfare for this purpose). And the boldest stroke was the one directed against Venezuela—the subject of the Washington conference.

The resolution contains an extraordinary warning: another Venezuela would mean war with one or more American republics, individually or collectively.

For Revolution

And since Castro originally asserted and reasserted his right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, the American republics, through their declaration to the Cuban people, now affirm the right to intervene in his. Castro rightly described it as a call to counterrevolution. Ironically, the call was drafted by the Brazilian Foreign Minister, Vasco Leitao da Cunha. As ambassador to Cuba, he fought to keep the door open to a reconciliation between Castro and the other American republics. Castro refused to walk through it then. It is too late for him to do so now.